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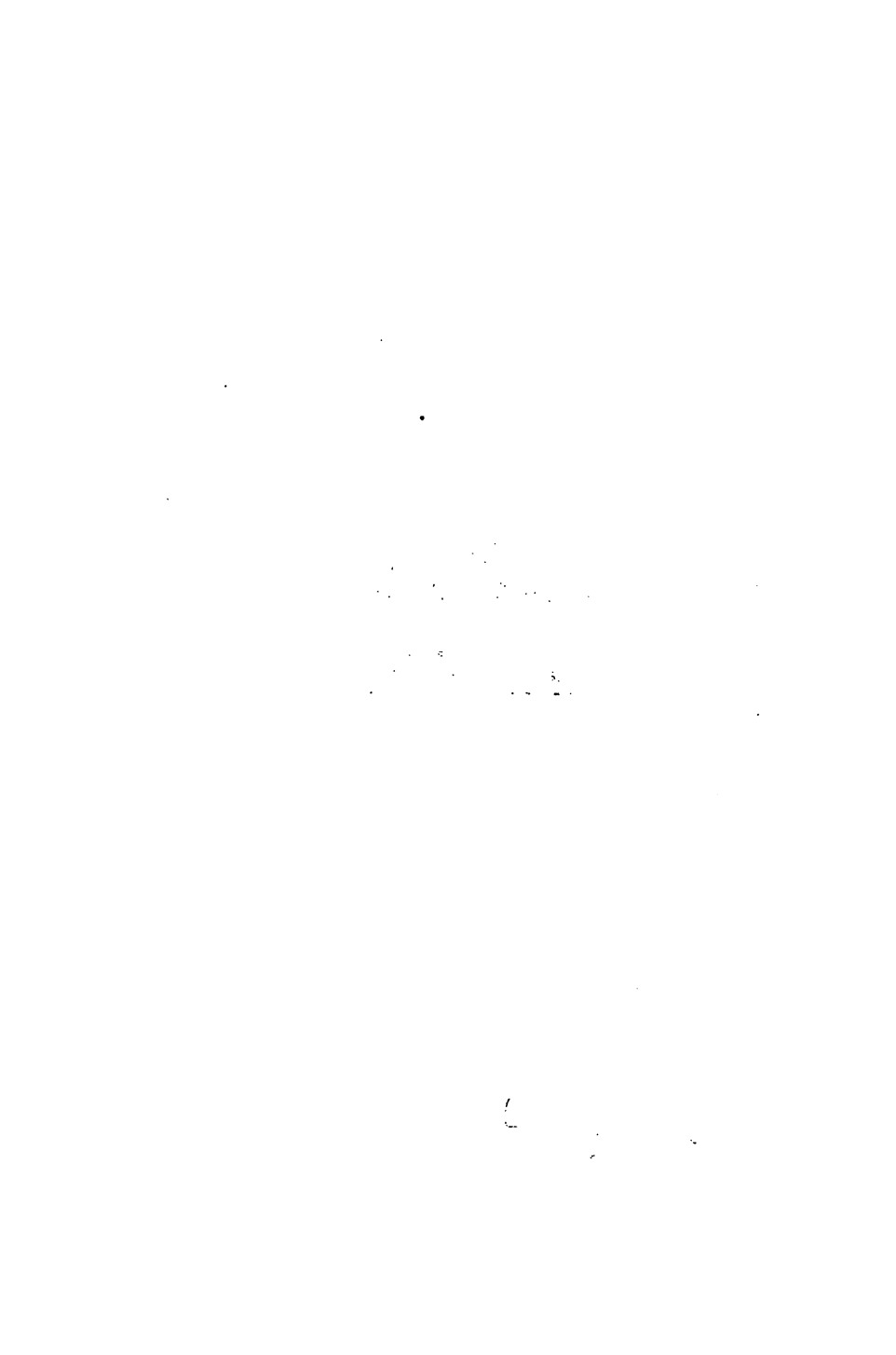
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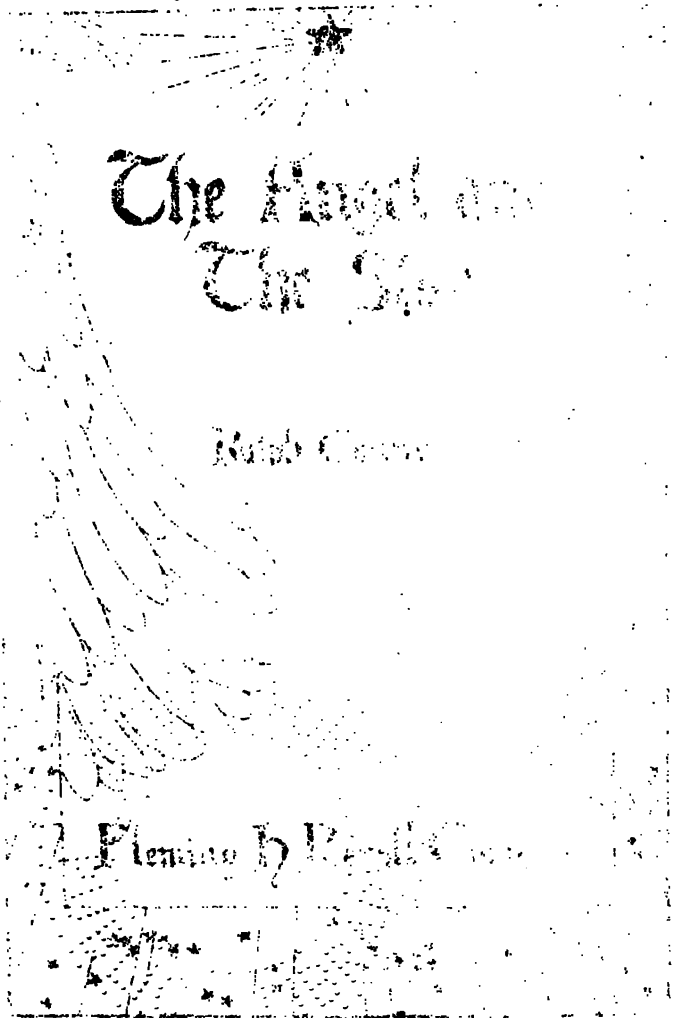




Page Twenty-six.

"DOWN THIS QUIVERING PATHWAY MYRIADS OF SHINING
ONES STREAMED."

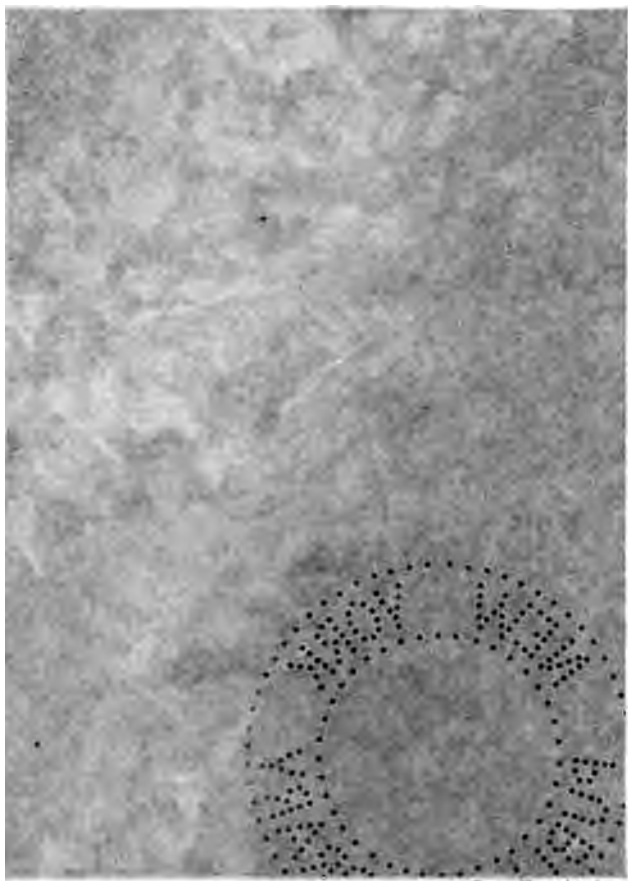




The Angel and
The Star

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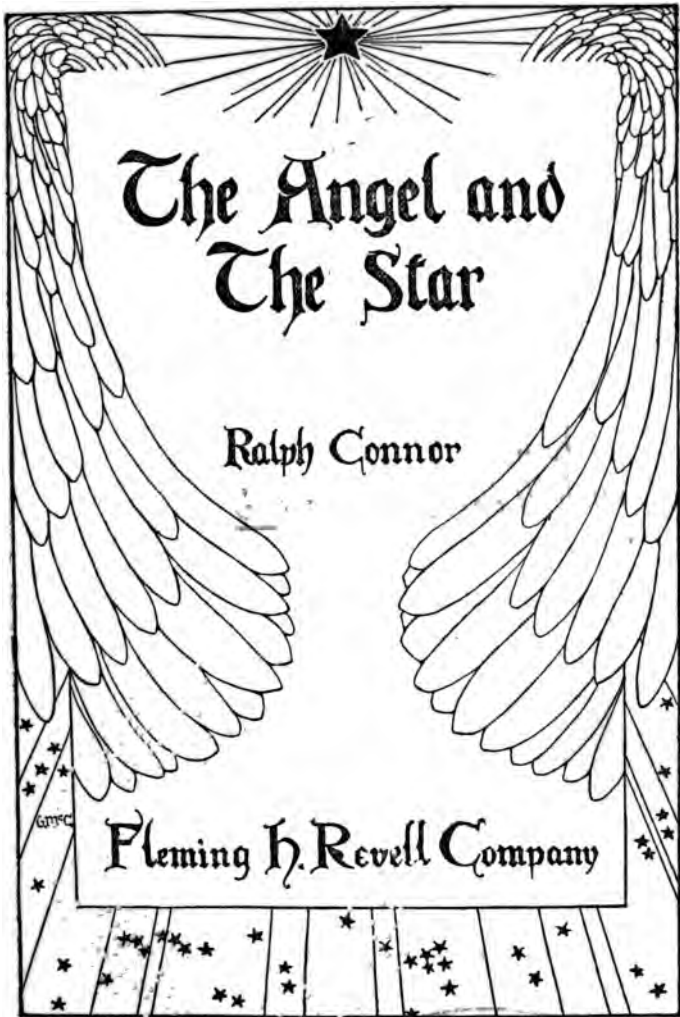
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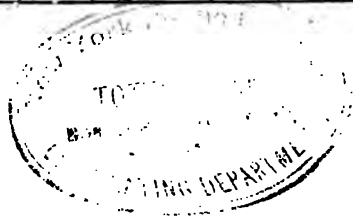
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IN THE STREAM



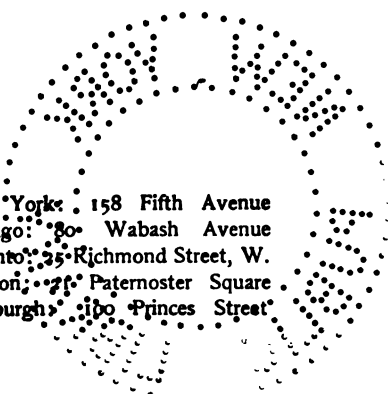
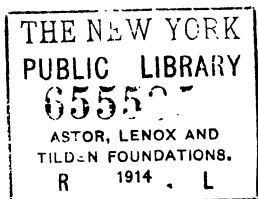


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TO MY BELOVED PEOPLE OF ST.
STEPHEN'S WHO SO LOYALLY BEAR
WITH ME AND PRAY FOR ME AND WORK
WITH ME IN THE KING'S SERVICE

9566

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The Angel

"DOWN THIS QUIVERING PATHWAY MYRIADS OF SHINING ONES STREAMED."

"HIS WIFE, ALSO OF THIS ROYAL LINE, WAITED UPON HER LORD AT HIS EVENING MEAL."

"BROTHER," HE ENTREATED . . . "I BESEECH THEE HEAR ME AND GRANT US SOME QUIET SPOT."

"LONG AFTER THE SHEPHERD LAY WITH HIS FELLOW WATCHERS ON THE HILLSIDE."

"WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS HIS WIFE CAME TO HIM, DREADING HIS AGONY, FEARING FOR HIS FAITH."

The Star

"NO NEED OF GUIDE, FOR ONCE FREE OF THE CITY STEADILY BURNED BEFORE THEM A WONDROUS STAR."

"CAN WE FIND ONE TO PRESENT US TO THE KING?" HE ASKED IN THE HEBREW TONGUE.

"AND NOW WE HAVE DONE OUR HOMAGE AND OFFERED OUR GIFTS."

"JEHOVAH THY GOD BLESS THEE," HE SAID, HIS VOICE VIBRATING AND DEEP.



THE STAR



HE city of Jerusalem was troubled, was deeply troubled. Through its crowded streets had run a rumour that had kindled to flame the national Messianic hopes. A distinguished embassy from a far East land had come two nights ago, upon a strange quest. They had come seeking a King. At first men had laughed, but the grave majesty of the strangers, and the costly trappings of their caravan had changed the laughter

The Angel and The Star

to serious attention, and before the first night had gone, the streets and markets, the bazaars and wineshops were thrilling with the news. From the street to the Palace the rumour had run, and Herod himself, at first scornful, had deigned to summon the travellers to his presence. To-day at early dawn a strange thing had happened. The Great Council had been called by the King. That Idumean usurper, uncertain of his throne, hated by his people, despised by the noble families as an upstart, loathed by the priests as an apostate, trembled at every breath of Messianic enthusiasm, at every suggestion of a rival. He

The Angel and The Star

had shown his fear by summoning the Great Council. This whole day had they been in session. Jerusalem was well-nigh mad with anxiety.

The appearance of a Messianic Leader, the sounding of one clear Messianic cry through these streets and Jerusalem would run with blood. No wonder Jerusalem was troubled. What would the next hour bring? In tense fear they waited. What would come forth from that fortress Palace?

Night was falling, when from the gorgeous Palace gates came forth the Embassy from the East, travel-worn but stately, and following them the Council. In a moment from lip to

The Angel and The Star

lip ran the word, that nothing need be feared. And all Jerusalem, the light-hearted, gay, fiercely religious, cosmopolitan city, relaxed itself in scornful laughter at its recent panic. What fools they had been ! A few foolish astrologers had seen a star in the East and had guessed a King was to be born. What accursed folly was this ? But what could you expect of these Gentile dogs, and worshippers of idols ?

And now they were gone seeking their King in Bethlehem ! In Bethlehem ! as if a King could there be born and Jerusalem and its wise and learned Scribes be unaware. And Jerusalem turned to its bargaining and sacrific-

The Angel and The Star

ing, its praying and its wine drinking much relieved.

In due time that strange caravan had reached the terraced hills of Bethlehem. No need of guide, for once free of the city steadily burned before them a wondrous star.

Bethlehem was puzzled. Whence came these strange men? And who was that majestic figure in command? The rabble gathered about them. At the Inn they paused.

Their leader of kingly carriage and of patriarchal mien gave command. The beasts were unburdened, and from the load one hamper was selected and brought near.

The Angel and The Star

The innkeeper with obsequious hospitality offered shelter and refreshment. But the little company drew together and talked.

“How shall we make approach?” said one. “Who will bring us to Him?” Then after some grave and earnest deliberation, their leader turned to the innkeeper.

“Can we find one to present us to the King?” he asked in the Hebrew tongue.

“The King?” said the innkeeper. “What King?”

“The King of the Jews.”

“Nay,” laughed the innkeeper scornfully, “he lives not in so humble

The Angel and The Star

a place as Bethlehem, though yonder is a palace he has built. In Jerusalem you will find the King of the Jews, not here."

"Nay, friend," the leader answered with grave dignity, "He is here, born, and yonder is His star."

"His star!" cried the innkeeper. "Now Jehovah defend us. Thou art mad. Whence art ye?"

"From the rising sun. Many weeks have we travelled seeking this King, for we saw the rising of His star in the East long months ago.'

"His star? Are ye then of those who follow such accursed vanities and worship the abominations of the

The Angel and The Star

heathen? If so, there is no place for ye in my inn."

"Nay, we worship God," reverently replied the stranger with unruffled calm, "and would fain to do homage to His messenger, the King of the Jews, whose star we have followed from Jerusalem to this place."

"King of the Jews?" impatiently replied the innkeeper. "Here, Shepherd," he called to the Chief Shepherd of the sacrificial flock who was passing to his nightly watch, "thou art skilled in these matters. What means this folly of the stars?"

The Shepherd turned to the Man of the East and gravely saluted him.



Page Forty-four.

“CAN WE FIND ONE TO PRESENT US TO THE KING?” HE
ASKED IN THE HEBREW TONGUE.

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The Angel and The Star

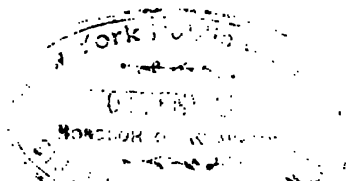
“Jehovah give thee peace. What wouldst thou?”

“We come seeking the King of the Jews, for in a land far from this we saw, many months ago, the rising of His star, and we have come to do Him homage. But no man can we find who can give us guiding to His presence, not even Herod.”

9566 “Herod!” exclaimed the Shepherd scornfully. “Sought ye a King from that usurper?”

“Hush,” said the innkeeper, glancing about upon the crowd. “Thou art mad to speak thus in the street.”

“But,” continued the Man of the East, “His Council directed us to



The Angel and The Star

Bethlehem, saying it was there the King was to be born."

"Born!" said the Shepherd quickly.

"Yea, and as we left the city His star appeared again, and lo! there it stands over that house before us. But we have none to bring us fittingly to Him."

The Shepherd stood silent as in a great maze, looking at the luminous star that hung low over the house. "Truly this is wonderful," he said slowly, "for in that house abides a Babe with its mother at whose birth strange things came to pass. But how came ye to hear?"

"Yonder is His star," calmly said the Man from the East.

The Angel and The Star

“His star ! what has He to do with stars ?”

“Ay, verily and so said I,” interrupted the innkeeper. “These be cursed and unclean worshippers of the host of heaven.”

“Nay, friend, we worship God and seek His anointed, the King of the Jews. Knowest thou this mother and this Babe ?” he said to the Shepherd.

“I know the Babe and the mother ; come,” and he led them to the house where the young Child was and departed to his nightly watch deeply musing. Truly mystery deepened about this Babe. How wonderful that these Gentiles in their far coun-

The Angel and The Star

try should have come to know of Him! How wonderful they should have found their way to Bethlehem! Their story of the Star meant little to the Shepherd. For him the stars had no message, and yet as he stood upon his lonely hillside gazing upward at the splendid pageant of the night the words of his ancestor the Poet-King came to him :

“ When I consider Thy Heavens,
The moon and the stars that Thou didst
ordain !
What is man that Thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man that Thou visitest
him ! ”

Never again would the old doubts
harass him. That night of glorious

[50]

7

The Angel and The Star

vision had changed all things. Jehovah had visited His people. Heaven with its stars, Earth with its peoples would henceforth seem nearer to him and dearer and Jehovah would forever seem his Friend. An hour passed when the fretful voice of the innkeeper roused him.

“Hither, Shepherd, and relieve me of this mad star-gazer, for he would take no rest nor give me any till I had brought him to thee.”

“Be at peace, friend,” said the Man of the East, placing a piece of gold in his hand. “Now go.”

The tone and gesture of command struck the innkeeper dumb, and mur-

The Angel and The Star

muring a word of thanks, he hastily retired, leaving the two upon the starlit hillside together.

“Listen, my brother,” said the Man from the East, “for I would speak with thee, and I cannot rest till I know what my heart craves.” He paused, then said abruptly, “Tell me of this Babe; of His birth.”

The Shepherd hesitated. “Why should I tell thee? thou art not of Israel.”

“Thou hast truly spoken, yet shouldst thou tell me.”

“And wherefore?”

“For two reasons. Thou knowest thy law concerning the stranger?”

The Angel and The Star

The Shepherd bowed assent. "I am a stranger and in deep need." Touched by the pathetic dignity of that simple appeal the Shepherd took his hand in sympathy. "And further, if this Babe indeed be Messiah to Israel then surely He is to more than Israel. Else what mean these words of thine ancient prophets, 'In Him shall the Gentiles trust,' and again, 'They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him.' If He be thy Messiah, then to-night is this Scripture fulfilled."

The Shepherd pondered. "Surely thou art no worshipper of false gods."

"Nay; I worship God," simply interposed the Man of the East.

The Angel and The Star

“And more,” continued the Shepherd, as if to himself, “the song said ‘Good-will to men.’”

“Tell me,” entreated the stranger, his proud face softened by pain to humility, “for my heart is heavy from long years of agony.”

But the age-long Jewish hate and jealous scorn of the Gentile held the Shepherd silent. To speak of Israel’s Messiah to this alien and worshipper of stars, to him seemed sacrilege.

“Let me tell thee my story,” said the Man of the East at length, “perhaps then thy hard heart shall melt.” And to the shuddering ears of the Shepherd, he told a tale of sin and

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Page Fifty-eight.

"AND NOW WE HAVE DONE OUR HOMAGE AND OFFERED
OUR GIFTS."

The Angel and The Star

lust and blood and treachery so terrible that it seemed to defile the very night.

“Then when I had drunk the dregs, my heart within me woke and cried for vengeance till I grew mad with desperate remorse. In vain I offered sacrifices upon the altars of the gods; in vain I poured forth treasure at the bidding of their priests. Deeply I studied, many lands I travelled seeking peace, but ever that cry of vengeance night and day echoed through the spaces of my soul till life became one long agony. The mysteries of our religion I mastered, the wisdom of the heavens I searched but

The Angel and The Star

found no help. At length to the wisest and the best of the priesthood of our land I went, an old man who lived remote from the world's fevers and ambitions, its joys and griefs. I told him my story. Swift was his answer: 'What thou lovest best, offer that to God and thou shalt find peace.' Like a sword in my bones was that word, for I had but one son, a beautiful youth. I turned away from the priest with my sin and my agony upon me. Vainly I sought escape! Vainly I sought peace! Then I remembered thy Abraham, and, for the sin of my soul, I offered the fruit of my body. Ah! My son!

The Angel and The Star

My son! But even that sacrifice availed not. From that high altar I came down cursing the gods of my people, and determined that I should seek no longer peace in life but death. That night, as I swept the heavens in my last study of the mysteries, my eye caught the rising of a star of wondrous light and beauty. As if from Heaven a voice cried, 'Follow where I lead,' and faint hope trembled in my heart. I knew that somewhere a Great One was to be born who might have help for me. But where? All books I studied in the light of my knowledge of the stars, till in thy sacred books I read thus of thy com-

The Angel and The Star

ing King. 'The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' And again, 'From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name and a peace offering, for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith Jehovah of hosts.' I obeyed the leading of the Star, and following, we have found Him. And now we have done our homage and offered our gifts. But still my heart's anguish is unappeased. The King has come truly whose Kingdom shall rule over all Kingdoms. But what of my sin?"

The Angel and The Star

The Shepherd was deeply moved at the marvellous and terrible story.

“Said she naught of sins?” he asked.

“Nay, we spoke little. In a King’s presence we are silent. But if thou hast aught to tell, send me not back unhelped, for my sin is more than I can bear.” The agony in his face touched the Shepherd’s heart. He forgot his Jewish prejudice. “Listen,” he said, and told the story of the angels and the song.

With eager face the stranger listened, deeply anxious, deeply perplexed. When the tale was done there was long silence, then the Man of the

The Angel and The Star

East spoke. "Good-will to men! a Saviour! Good! But Angels! I know naught of them!"

"Nor I of stars."

A light began to break upon the swarthy face of the Man of the East. "Oh," he cried aloud, "but thee an Angel and me a Star led to the King. Praised be God!"

Then after long musing he spake with trembling voice, "Oh, my brother! can it be—thinkest thou—can there be with God for the sinful—peace?"

"Yea verily. It is written 'with Thee there is forgiveness that Thou mayest be feared.'"

The Angel and The Star

“ But how ? ”

“ By confession and sacrifice,” the Shepherd had almost answered, but remembering the stranger’s terrible story he hesitated, then said “ Hope thou in Jehovah.”

“ In Jehovah ! ” replied the stranger sadly, “ thy God ! ”

“ Verily and the God of this Babe.”

“ Ah ! the King of the Jews ! ”

“ Yea ! and ‘ in Him shall the Gentiles trust.’ ”

The stranger stood long silent gazing across the hills at the wondrous Star. Then he took the Shepherd’s hand. “ Jehovah thy God bless thee,” he said, his voice vibrating and deep.

The Angel and The Star

“In Jehovah and in His King there is hope. I shall try to be content.”

“Jehovah give thee peace,” replied the Shepherd.

Then they parted.

“Stay,” said the Shepherd. The stranger turned. “Spoke the mother the name of the Babe?”

“Yea. It is Jeshua.”

“Knowest thou how it was given?”

“Nay.”

“An Angel said, ‘He should save His people from their sins.’”

The dark faced man drew near. “Tell me again,” he entreated with trembling lips. “What said the Angel?”



Page Sixty-one.

"JEHOVAH THY GOD BLESS THEE." HE SAID, HIS VOICE
VIBRATING AND DEEP.

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The Angel and The Star

“Thou shalt call His name Jeshua, for He shall save His people from their sins.”

Then broke the stranger's proud reserve. The fountain of his tears was broken up. He turned towards the Star, and prostrating himself, he worshipped. Then with reverent grace he kissed the Shepherd, weeping, and went his way.

“Is it peace?” spake the Shepherd after him.

“It is peace!” came back from the star-lit darkness, and gazing at the Star the Shepherd wondered and bowed his head and worshipped.



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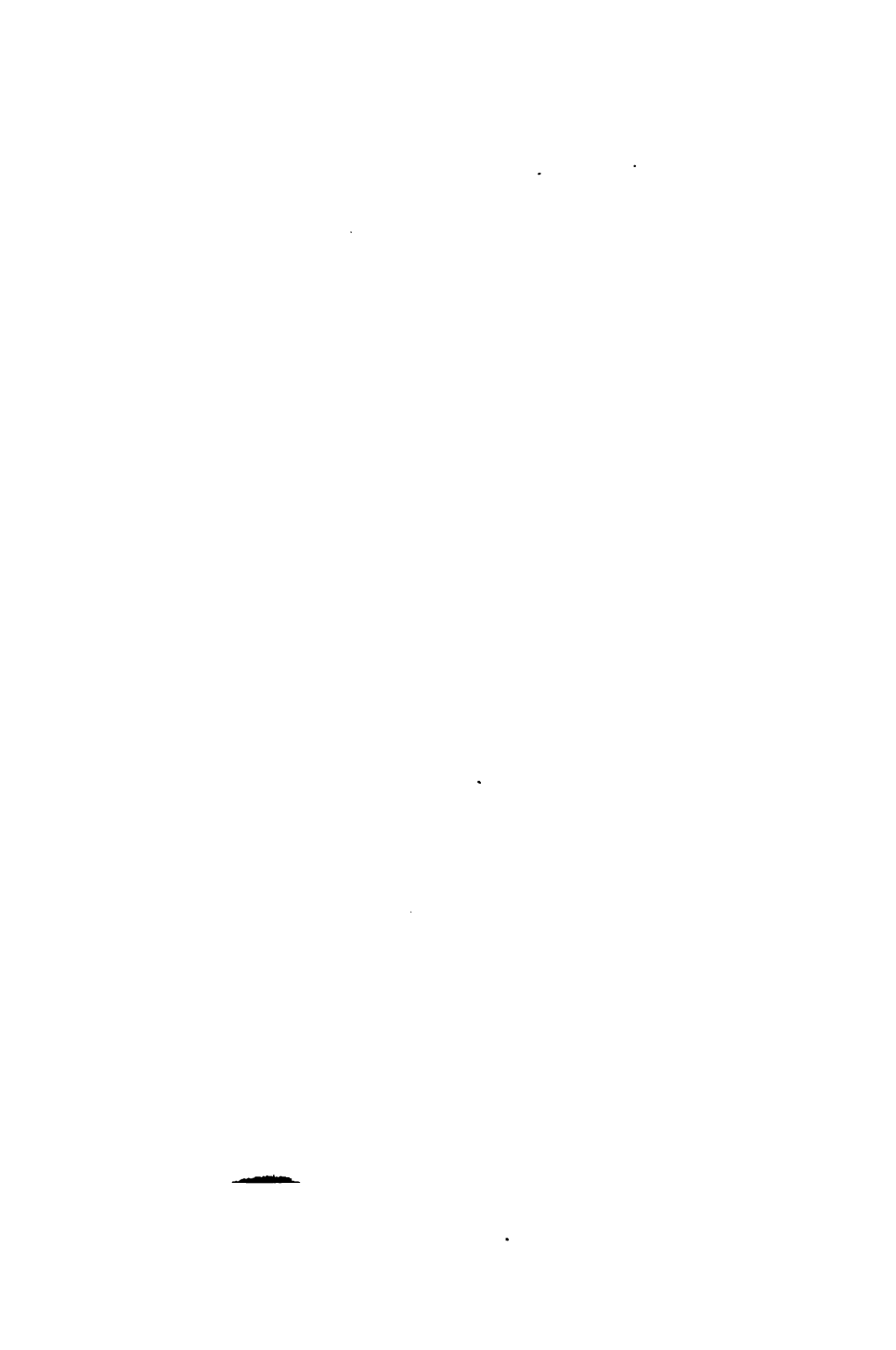
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